

Stream Line

City of Indianapolis / Department of Public Works / Clean Stream Program

Spring 2005 | Issue 6

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Statement Of Purpose

The Indianapolis Clean Stream Team is overseeing many projects to keep raw sewage out of our waterways and improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods. Stream Line is published quarterly to keep you informed about the city's progress in reducing raw sewage overflows and restoring the health of our streams.

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CONSTRUCTION BEGINS TO REDUCE OVERFLOWS TO POGUES RUN

The city will reduce sewage overflows near four local schools through a sewer and tunneling project now under construction on the city's eastside.

Pogues Run was selected for the city's first tunneling project to reduce sewer overflows because of its proximity to Arsenal Tech High School, Harshman Middle School, Horizon Alternative Middle School and Theodore Potter Elementary.

"Citizens have asked us to prioritize improvements near schools, parks and places where children play," said Mona Salem, deputy director for the Department of Public Works (DPW). "This project was put on our priority list to help protect kids in the area."

"It is always a challenge to make students aware of the potential hazards – especially after a flood event," said Steve Young, chief of facilities management for Indianapolis Public Schools. "You wouldn't necessarily know a hazardous situation had been created."

Focusing on the lower portion of Pogues Run between 10th and New York streets, the project will rehabilitate old brick sewers, dig a new tunnel to capture sewer overflows and redirect those overflows into an existing downtown tunnel – and away from the schools.

Overflows in the area are expected to be reduced from an average of 22-38 in a typical year to four overflows or less, based on average rainfall statistics. Dry years will see fewer overflows; wet years may cause more than four.



Walsh Construction crew members pour concrete to create a wastewater collection structure under East Michigan Street near Pogues Run. Eventually, three sewer pipes will converge into the underground box, which will direct overflows into an underground tunnel and away from area schools and neighborhoods.

DPW Begins 2005 Responding to Rain, Floods

Department of Public Works employees worked around the clock to respond to emergency calls in January, when unusually heavy winter rains caused flooding and sewage overflows throughout the city.

DPW's Flood Command Center distributed more than 10,000 sandbags, erected safety signs and responded to emergency requests. Three DPW township service coordinators were on call 24 hours a day during the storm event to respond to resident concerns.

The National Weather Service reported 6 inches of rain fell on Indianapolis from Jan. 1-6. It rained more during the first week in January than it typically does in January and February combined.

While low-lying areas, such as Ravenswood and Frog Hollow, received the most news media attention, service calls to DPW came from across the city.

"All eight townships reported many incidents of backups, overflows, drainage problems, flooding and other sewer-related issues," said Public Works Director James Garrard. "This wet weather streak

(see "Responding" page 3)

Find us on the Web at: www.indycleanstreams.org

From the Director...

James Garrard
Director of Public Works



Since late last year, DPW has been working with state and federal regulatory agencies to finalize our long-term plan for controlling sewer overflows.

Meanwhile, recent developments in the Indiana General Assembly should lead to more legal certainty for our city and other communities with sewage overflows. Senate Bill 620 has had the support of cities and towns, environmental activists and the business community, because it will help Indiana get more overflow reduction plans approved and implemented.

As we went to print, the bill had passed the House 95-0 and was awaiting the governor's signature. If signed into law, the legislation will still require communities to reduce sewage overflows in a timely manner. It also creates legal tools that lessen the risk of enforcement actions if communities are implementing approved plans as required. This directs local dollars toward projects to solve sewage overflows, and not to unnecessary state and federal fines.

The legislation also creates a new recreational use subcategory in Indiana's water quality standards. This subcategory recognizes that even after a community builds facilities to reduce overflows, some overflows will still occur.

For example, EPA and IDEM have agreed that Indianapolis should build new storage tanks, underground tunnels and larger sewers to store and convey sewage to our central treatment plants. However, we know these facilities cannot capture every storm, making it impossible to make our streams safe for swimming all the time.

For this reason, Indianapolis will ask the state to approve the new recreational use subcategory for those few storms that will cause overflows after our new facilities are in place. Because people are unlikely to be swimming during these large storms, the risk to public health is minimal.

I'd like to thank the legislators, communities and other stakeholders who have worked together on Senate Bill 620 to ensure continued progress in cleaning our waterways.

If you have questions about these issues, please contact the Clean Stream Team at 327-8720 or my office at 327-4000.

BRIEFS

White River Organization Recognized

The Friends of the White River became an honorary member of the Clean Stream Team in April for its efforts to preserve and protect the city's primary waterway.

A non-profit organization formed in 1985, FOWR represents the river's recreational users, nearby residents, and all citizens interested in the preservation of the river as a natural resource.

The Friends organize and participate in many river cleanup and educational events each year. Executive Director Kevin Hardie also serves on DPW's Clean Stream Team Advisory Committee.

"This volunteer organization is an invaluable part of our city and vital to the overall efforts of DPW and its Clean Stream Team," said DPW Director James Garrard.

The Clean Stream Team award recognizes businesses, organizations and residents that exhibit extraordinary effort on behalf of our waterways. To nominate someone for this award, visit our Web site at www.indycleanstreams.org.



DPW Director James Garrard (right) presents Robb Chitwood, president of Friends of the White River, with the Clean Stream Team Award.

Stream Line Available Via E-mail

The quarterly Stream Line newsletter and other updates from the Indianapolis Clean Stream Team are now available via e-mail.

You can sign up at www.indycleanstreams.org to receive an HTML-based version of Stream Line and other e-mail updates on Indianapolis water quality issues. You can also visit the Web site to read past issues of Stream Line.

Be on the lookout for changes at www.indycleanstreams.org. We are updating and expanding the site to include more information on the city's stormwater and septic programs, in addition to information about the city's plans to reduce raw sewage overflows into our streams.



Construction (continued from page 1)

“We are pleased that the city is doing what it’s doing,” Young said. “It certainly will be an improvement over what has existed for a long time.”

Another key part of this \$19.2 million construction project includes the replacement of the old Dorman Street pedestrian bridge and the widening of Pogues Run. According to Bob Zieles, DPW construction manager, these changes will bring the Cottage Home neighborhood out of the 100-year flood zone and allow residents to discontinue their flood insurance.

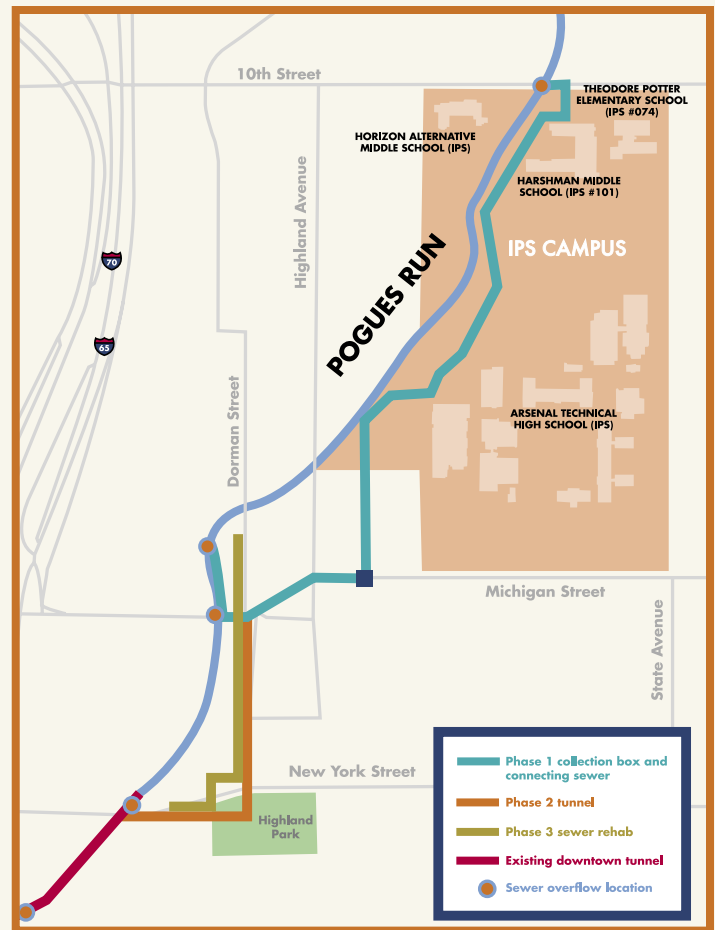
The project started earlier this year when workers began digging under Michigan Street near the Interstate 65-North ramp to build a sewage collection box and a connecting sewer from Michigan Street up to 10th Street to capture sewer overflows. [See map.] This first phase is expected to be complete by the end of 2005.

The second phase, initiated in March, will dig a tunnel connecting the new Michigan Street collection structure to the existing downtown tunnel. State-of-the-art tunneling equipment will be launched from Highland Park, located at New York and Dorman streets.

Phase three will include rehabilitation of brick sewers along Dorman and New York streets. All three phases are scheduled to be complete in August 2006.

Additional improvements will be made later to reduce overflows in the upper portions of Pogues Run under the city’s long-term control plan, now under negotiation with state and federal regulators.

The Pogues Run project team includes design firm Clark Dietz, Inc. and Brierly Associates, inspection firm Christopher B. Burke Engineering Ltd. and contractors Walsh Construction Company, Super Excavators Inc., and Insituform Technologies, USA, Inc.



This 3-phase project will capture sewer overflows and relocate them to an underground tunnel and away from area schools.

Responding (continued from page 1)

is just another reminder of the work that remains ahead of us to upgrade our sanitary and storm sewer systems.”

DPW’s Customer Service center reported nearly three times as many service requests in January 2005 compared with January 2004, as shown in the chart below.

Washington Township was the source of many service calls for sewage overflows, drainage issues, flooding and debris caught in sanitary and storm sewers. Calls made from other townships were mainly about drainage and flooding problems.

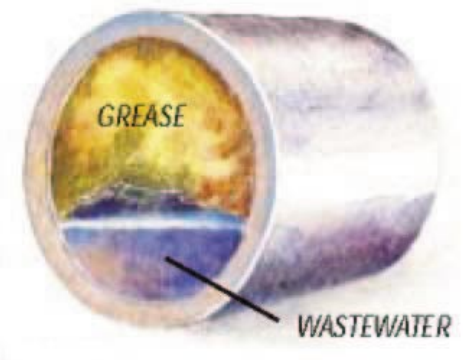
DPW SERVICE REQUESTS COMPARISON - JANUARY 2004 VS. JANUARY 2005

PROBLEM	BACKUP	OVERFLOW	DRAINAGE	FLOODING	SURCHARGED	DEBRIS IN STRUCTURE	DITCH DRAINAGE	TOTALS
2004 JANUARY TOTALS	83	0	141	43	16	23	18	324
2005 JANUARY TOTALS	90	48	244	298	103	81	16	880

FATS, OILS AND GREASE CAN CLOG THE CITY'S SEWERS

What do you do with grease and food scraps left after cooking? If you send them down the drain, you could be contributing to sewage backups and overflows.

"When fats, oils and grease are washed down sinks and floor drains, they can build up over time and eventually create clogs," said John Chavez, administrator for the Department of Public Works, Office of Environmental Services. "These clogs can cause sewer backups and prevent the sewers from safely transporting sewage to our treatment plants."



HOW YOU CAN HELP

Indianapolis businesses and residents can help by taking these simple steps to reduce the amount of fats, oils and grease in our sewers:

- Wipe pots, pans and dishware with a paper towel before washing to reduce grease discharges into the sewer.
- Dispose of food waste through composting or the trash rather than using garbage disposals.
- Never dispose of leftover cooking oil down the drain.

If you own a restaurant or commercial food establishment, make sure you have a grease interceptor and that it is maintained and operated properly.

Grease-clogged sewers must be cleaned more frequently, increasing the city's sewer maintenance costs at a time when the city budget is already strapped for cash. Sewer overflows and backups also can lead to expensive environmental fines and penalties.

Fats, oils and grease are found in food scraps, meat fats, lard, oil, margarine, butter, baking goods, sauces, and dairy products. Under city ordinances, restaurants, bars, hotels, hospitals, schools and other food service establishments are required to install a grease interceptor to prevent grease from flowing into the sewer system. Grease interceptors must be inspected and cleaned periodically to keep them functioning well. When interceptors are not installed and operated correctly, grease blockages will occur. Using enzymes and other grease-fighting agents usually only moves the clog further downstream, Chavez said. For more information please visit our Web site at www.indycleanstreams.org.

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